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SUBJECT: City of Duluth Finance Department wins awards for excellence from Government Finance Officers Association

BY: Kelli Latuska, Public Information Officer

**City of Duluth Finance Department wins awards for excellence from
Government Finance Officers Association**

[DULUTH, MN] The City of Duluth Finance Department is pleased to announce that it has recently been awarded two awards for financial reporting excellence by the Government Finance Officers Association of the United States and Canada (GFOA): the **Certificate of Achievement for Excellence in Financial Reporting** for the City's annual comprehensive financial report for the 2021 fiscal year, and the **Distinguished Budget Presentation Award** for its annual budget for the 2023 fiscal year.

Both the budget and the report were judged by impartial panels to meet the GFOA's high standards, which include: demonstrating a constructive "spirit of full disclosure" to clearly communicate its financial story and motivate potential users and user groups to read the report. The Certificate of Achievement is the highest form of recognition in the area of governmental accounting and financial reporting, and its attainment represents a significant accomplishment by a government and its management. The Distinguished Budget Presentation Award is assessed on guidelines that include meeting proficiencies in how well the budget serves as a policy document, a financial plan, an operations guide, and a communications device, and meeting all the criteria represents a significant achievement.

"I am extremely proud of the work the entire Finance Department has done in order to receive the Certificate of Achievement for Excellence in Financial Reporting," said Josh Bailey, City Auditor. "Finance staff is charged with implementing new accounting standards and producing a financial report that is audited by the Minnesota Office of the State Auditor. Financial reporting for governments has become more complex because of new accounting standards issued by the Governmental Accounting Standards Board. City Finance staff has continued to meet the additional reporting requirements and this award is a

validation of the work they have done. Finance staff does this while managing their ever-increasing day-to-day work load due to a growing number of federal and state grants that the City has been awarded.”

This achievement marks the 40th time the City has received the Distinguished Budget Presentation Award. City Budget Manager Jessica Kasper said of the achievement, “I am so proud of all the hard work the budget team and City departments put into this important document. The process of completing the steps for this award takes a lot of time and energy.” The complicated nature of the award process is as layered as the work City budget staff completes each day. “As budget staff completes this process they also work diligently to help departments stay within their budgets and think creatively on how to get the most out of each public dollar,” says Kasper. “This often means daily forecasting to get the City through December. It’s a really delicate balance between City operational needs and taxpayer ability to pay.” The City budget book can be read on our website here: <https://duluthmn.gov/media/15483/2023-final-budget-book.pdf>.

These awards did not come as any surprise to City Finance Director Jen Carlson. “Both the Certificate of Achievement for Excellence in Financial Reporting and the Distinguished Budget Presentation Award are the highest form of recognition in government reporting and budgeting,” said Carlson. “Significant work is required to receive these awards, and because our City makes financial accountability and transparency top priority, we choose to continue to go through these extra steps to ensure we are providing our community with accurate, transparent, audited financial reports, as well as budgets that serve as policy documents, financial plans, operations guides, and communication tools. These well-deserved awards are a testament to the quality of work provided by our dedicated, hardworking, talented Finance team, and their managers, who continue to go above and beyond.”

City of Duluth CAO Noah Schuchman agreed with the sentiment of pride in the Finance Department stated by Carlson. “These awards are no insignificant milestone, yet our City’s Finance management and staff achieve them year after year,” said Schuchman. “It’s a true illustration of how hard the staff works every single day and how high their own self-standard is as a department. We’re lucky to have them here.”

Government Finance Officers Association (GFOA) advances excellence in government finance by providing best practices, professional development, resources and practical research for more than 22,500 members and the communities they serve.

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Image caption: From L to R:: Budget Manager Jessica Kasper, Finance Director Jen Carlson, and City Auditor Josh Bailey



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